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Chair: **Ms. Critchlow** (Vice Chair) ..... (Guyana)

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In the absence of the Chair, Ms. Critchlow (Guyana), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (*continued*)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/66/38, 99, 181, 212 and 215)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/66/211)

1. **Mr. Mohamed** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that member countries had been supportive of efforts to promote the status of women and had participated actively in regional and international efforts to ensure women's advancement.

2. ASEAN had adopted declarations on the advancement of women and on the elimination of violence against women in the region, together with work plans to operationalize both declarations. In addition, it had established the Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, while the ASEAN Committee on Women met annually to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the key regional priorities and cooperation on women's issues and concerns.

3. The Committee on Women had established close partnerships with several key international organizations working for gender equality, the advancement of women and the elimination of violence and discrimination against women. The Committee also organized regional training and consultative events to share experiences, build commitments and reach a common understanding of issues related to the advancement of women.

4. Since 2007, a blueprint had been developed for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, representing the human dimension of ASEAN cooperation and the commitment to improve the quality of life of its peoples through the implementation of productive people-centred and socially responsible actions.

5. **Mr. Errázuriz** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that members of the Group were fully committed to women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women as a requisite for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Moreover, social and economic development and full democracy were only possible in conditions of real equality between men and women. Consequently, members had decided to include the gender perspective as a cross-cutting issue in the design, implementation and evaluation of their public policies. In addition, member States had amended their legislative and regulatory frameworks in order to eliminate discrimination against women.

6. The Rio Group welcomed the appointment of Michelle Bachelet as Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, and fully supported its strategic plan. It also appreciated that the Commission on the Status of Women would be providing political orientation for its work. Any mechanism adopted by the new agency's Executive Board when allocating resources to gender issues should include specific indicators on the empowerment of women throughout the world.

7. The Group trusted that the mandate of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) would be fully incorporated into the new agency in order to increase the impact of its activities worldwide, and also that the Institute would continue to operate from its headquarters in the Dominican Republic.

8. Violence against women, trafficking and smuggling of women and girl children, the feminization of poverty and HIV/AIDS were of growing concern to society; but also the situation of women who formed part of vulnerable groups and their access to health care and employment. Accordingly, the Rio Group called for increased international dialogue and cooperation in order to respond to the challenges posed by the economic crisis, the lack of food security and climate change.

9. The 2010 Brasilia Consensus, which called for empowering women, increasing their participation in decision-making and eliminating violence against them, had provided the basis for the countries of Latin America to continue their efforts to improve the situation of women. Moreover, the region had been a pioneer in developing regional and international instruments to eliminate violence against women and to promote the full exercise of women's rights.

10. The members of the Rio Group were committed to increasing measures to prevent all forms of human trafficking and to guarantee the protection and care of victims. They called on States to establish focal points

to ensure coordination between countries of origin, transit and destination in order to combat such crimes.

11. It was important to promote the economic empowerment of women, combating the structural causes of women's poverty and guaranteeing women equal access to productive resources, opportunities and public services. Discriminatory legislation should be repealed and the rights of migrants, especially women and children, protected.

12. A strong national gender mechanism was required, involving all sectors of society, with increased international cooperation to support the national initiatives of developing countries. The Rio Group urged Member States, multilateral organizations and civil society to help eliminate all forms of violence against women, support female heads of household, and advance the social, political and economic participation of women, that was so necessary for achieving development and overcoming social exclusion.

13. **Mr. Al-Hamadi** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said that the Group reaffirmed its commitment to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Indeed, the advancement of women and gender equality were vital to the success of any development strategy and women had a major role to play in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the fight against poverty, hunger and illiteracy and the protection of the environment. Moreover, their advancement was a fundamental condition of the Arab renaissance.

14. In consequence, those States had enacted laws and measures in accord with the relevant United Nations resolutions that were aimed at women's fully assuming that role, with a view to the building of a healthy society based on the sharing of resources and equality among all its components, including between the sexes. Such legislation guaranteed the protection of women's rights, full respect for their personal freedom and their protection against physical and psychological harm at all stages of life. In addition, policies, programmes and institutions had been established for the protection and rehabilitation of victims of violence. The Arab States had also passed laws to improve the situation of rural women, combat the marginalization from which they suffered and counter the stereotypes and social usages that prevented their enjoyment of all their fundamental rights equally with men.

15. Notwithstanding the difficulties that still persisted, women had made great strides in gaining access to the centres of decision-making in both the public and private spheres. Recent years had been marked by broad participation of women in political life, including the holding of ministerial posts, and growing involvement in economic activity.

16. Despite the advances achieved by Arab women in nearly every development field, the picture of the Arab woman prevailing in the West was a carryover from old stereotypes stored in the Western collective consciousness, i.e., that the role of the Arab woman could be summed up in subjection to the will of men in every aspect of life. Yet the historic recent political events known as the "Arab spring" had shown the entire world that Arab women had been gaining a prominent position in their societies, playing a pioneering role in raising people's awareness of their rights. The recent award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Yemen's Tawakkul Karman was perhaps the most eloquent recognition of the pioneering role that Arab women had come to play and the greatest proof that the stereotype commonly held in the West was false.

17. The most outstanding challenge facing the Arab Group remained the liberation of the occupied Arab lands and an end to the suffering of the civilian population under Israeli occupation, especially women in occupied Palestine and the Syrian Golan. The international community must shoulder its responsibility to take effective action to end that situation.

18. To build a world based on understanding among peoples, it was imperative that women assume a pioneering role in the rapprochement between civilizations and religions, refuting all theories that predict a clash between them. The international community must encourage women in every effort aimed at peace, mutual respect and dialogue among the world's peoples and guarantee women a greater role in decision-making with respect to conflict prevention and resolution, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

19. **Ms. Maina** (Nigeria) said that Nigeria was committed to the full implementation of the international instruments on gender equality and women's empowerment that had inspired its national gender policy and implementation plan. Key areas of the policy had been incorporated into the country's

Transformation Agenda to help Nigeria become a vibrant, stable and coherent society.

20. Currently, one third of the country's cabinet ministers were women, because Nigeria believed that women's voices, leadership and participation were steps towards equality and empowerment, but also national development and stability. Investing in women and girls had a multiplier effect on all aspects of national life. The domestication of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women remained a national priority.

21. Poverty remained the main social risk factor and programmes of conditioned grants had been established to address the many girl child issues relating to health care, including female genital mutilation, education and early marriage, and the abuse, discrimination and disempowerment to which women and girls were subjected. The Government had doubled the resources allocated to the Women's Centre to boost income-generating activities and to promote vocational training for women victims of violence. In addition, a mother and child free health care policy had been adopted.

22. **Ms. Gregg** (Liechtenstein) said that, at a time when some countries were in transition to a new era, women risked being excluded from the very processes their actions had helped bring about. Active at the grassroots level, they faced discriminatory practices when laws were codified and constitutions written. The United Nations should support efforts to fully include poor and otherwise marginalized women in democratic processes.

23. Almost 11 years after the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), women continued to be underrepresented in peace processes and their rights and needs were often neglected in peace accords and institutional arrangements. The United Nations should appoint more women to lead mediation and other transitional processes.

24. Liechtenstein trusted that the new monitoring and reporting arrangements on sexual violence in armed conflicts would provide information on its use and on the perpetrators. Ending all forms of violence against women was a matter of urgency.

25. Impunity intensified the powerlessness of the targets of violence and also led to revictimization and future acts of violence. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court had significantly advanced international law by recognizing sexual violence in conflict as a crime against humanity. Efforts by the Team of Experts on Rule of Law to help strengthen domestic accountability mechanisms were an example of positive complementarity, since formal justice systems often lacked the required resources to prosecute perpetrators. While accountability was of paramount importance, efforts to end impunity would depend on addressing structural discrimination, and ensuring the protection and legal empowerment of women.

26. Lastly, promoting legal skills and an understanding of government was crucial for ensuring full participation of women in society and the political process.

27. **Ms. Niang** (Senegal) said that the creation of UN-Women showed that the international community had considered it necessary to strengthen institutional mechanisms and international structures promoting the social integration of women.

28. A comparative study of 134 countries had revealed that the most competitive countries were those where gender equality was guaranteed. For a long time, society had discriminated in favour of men and failed to exploit the capabilities of women. To reduce the resulting disparities, under the third Millennium Development Goal, Senegal was elaborating policies and programmes incorporating the gender dimension.

29. To address some of the specific difficulties faced by women, Senegal had enacted laws punishing violence against women, including female genital mutilation; conducted a school enrolment campaign, which was helping to reduce early marriage and pregnancy, and was providing free maternal health care. Furthermore, a law had been adopted on parity in elective bodies, while a national fund had been created for the promotion of feminine entrepreneurship together with a women's credit fund.

30. Despite Senegal's significant involvement in peacekeeping operations, and the opening up of military and paramilitary jobs for women, implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) remained slow and timid.

31. **Ms. Shestack Phipps** (United States of America) said that the United States had made the empowerment of women and girls a guiding principle at home and abroad. Women's empowerment was increasingly critical in relation to their full political participation, especially during times of transition.

32. Women had recently been risking their lives in the Middle East and North Africa to lead street protests but, after pressing for democracy, some of the same women faced exclusion from key political negotiations. If women were not equal partners in the political process, the development, economic prosperity and stability of their nations were at risk. In that context, the work of the United Nations in highlighting the costs of excluding women from the political process was to be commended; particularly the recent high-level event on women's political participation.

33. Nationality laws that discriminated against women deprived women and their families of legal protection in their country of residence and could lead to statelessness. Without recognition by a State, individuals lacked identity documentation, which prejudiced them in multiple ways and laid stateless women and their families open to abuse and exploitation. The United States was seeking to raise global awareness of the problem that existed in as many as 30 countries around the world.

34. Women's nationality rights were a factor in determining their political, economic and social empowerment, and influenced their ability to contribute to the democratic governance, peace, stability, and economic development of their countries. The United States urged Governments to repeal discriminatory nationality laws, while supporting the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to prevent statelessness and encouraging other United Nations agencies to strengthen their work on the issue.

35. **Ms. Ruksakiati** (Thailand), noting that Thailand had recently elected its first female Prime Minister, said that her country had worked consistently to integrate a woman's perspective into its national development plans and had joined the efforts of the international community to further enhance the role of women.

36. Women's participation and empowerments were core elements of the country's latest national women's development plan and national economic and social development plan, which emphasized the vital contribution of rural women and women working in the informal sector to the country's social, economic and political development. Both plans gave priority to enabling women to participate fully at all levels of development.

37. Empowering women also meant protecting them from all forms of abuse and exploitation, and Thai laws guaranteed the rights, welfare and protection of all workers. Moreover, the national legal framework had been amended to protect women from domestic violence, abuse and exploitation.

38. Thailand's commitment to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women went beyond national efforts and it was a firm supporter of the work of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children and of UN-Women. Women played a fundamental role in change and, by ensuring their access to health care, employment, and social and economic independence, they could make a major contribution to their nation's prosperity and attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

39. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that his Government was promoting a socio-economic model expressed in a national human development plan that had contributed to the full insertion of women into every aspect of the life of the country.

40. Despite the global recession, Nicaragua had been able to maintain all its social services through successful policies and strategies, such as the family and community health care model, which had helped reduce maternal and child deaths and increased the life expectancy of women. Strategies had been implemented to combat violence against women, including strengthening the mechanisms for judicial proceedings, which had led to a substantial increase in the number of women reporting abuse or violence.

41. Under the Constitution, all Nicaraguans had the right to free, universal and quality education, while the equal opportunities law guaranteed women equal participation in public office. Currently, Nicaragua was the Latin American country with the highest percentage of women ministers and, in addition to the Nicaraguan Institute for Women, gender units had been established at every level of government to ensure that the gender perspective cross-cut all institutional plans and programmes.

42. To ensure the economic empowerment of women, the Government was investing in social programmes in the area of agriculture, granting micro-credits and individual and collective land titles.

43. **Mr. Wang Min** (China) said China supported incorporating the economic empowerment of rural women and children into national development plans

and strategies, as well as introducing the gender perspective into intergovernmental processes. Although the international community was becoming increasingly aware of the need for gender equality and women's empowerment, discrimination against women remained widespread and problems such as the financial crisis, inadequate social services and social instability seriously hindered their development.

44. China therefore endorsed the priority areas of work identified by UN-Women. In addition, it believed that, since women tended to bear the brunt of the effects of economic and social crises, attention should be given to safeguarding their rights and interests in the post-economic crisis era by increasing the offer of education and training and health care. Emphasis should also be placed on social development and the empowerment of women, which were interdependent, while international cooperation should be strengthened to advance the cause of women.

45. China welcomed the leading role played by the United Nations in the promotion of women's rights, and the efforts of UN-Women to work with Governments on the basis of mutual respect and consultation on an equal footing, while putting aside differences and working together to strive for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

46. The Chinese Government had recently adopted a national strategy for the development of women identifying major goals and polices across a wide range of economic, social and political areas. It would also continue to work towards the expansion and strengthening of international cooperation in order to safeguard women's rights and interests.

47. **Mr. Errázuriz** (Chile) said that Chile fully supported the efforts of the United Nations to incorporate women into the social, political and economic life of their countries with full and equal rights. The strategic programme of UN-Women would be a useful tool for advancing towards that goal.

48. His Government was introducing specific programmes to reinforce the country's commitment to women and the family. Maternity leave had recently been increased twofold, and a bill had just been introduced to provide direct transfers and incentives through a series of programmes designed to eliminate extreme poverty.

49. **Ms. Mørch Smith** (Norway) said that the pace of future economic and social development depended on the extent to which women and girls were included in society on an equal footing to men and boys. The World Bank Development Report had emphasized the correlation between equality and development, and indicated that the Bank would be mainstreaming gender equality into all its activities.

50. UN-Women had an important role to play in ensuring that gender equality was given the importance it deserved. Norway planned to play a constructive and, if necessary, a critical role as a partner for the new organization.

51. Gender equality was also a cornerstone for environmentally sustainable development and should be integrated into the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio 2012) and the seventeenth session of the parties to United Nations Climate Change Conference, since global warming and natural disasters threatened food security and sustainable development, which affected women and children differently than men.

52. Lastly, there was growing recognition that rural women were crucial agents in poverty reduction, food security and environmental sustainability; but, in many parts of the world, they lacked land rights, as well as access to knowledge, technology and decision-making in the agricultural sector.

53. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) said that the world was witnessing huge changes that women were deeply involved in, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa.

54. Egypt welcomed the activities of UN-Women to implement its strategic plan of action that gave priority to areas such as education, as a basis for the empowerment of women, and trafficking in women and girls, which was a brutal form of violence against women. However, the agency's mandate for dealing with sexual violence should be defined to avoid an overlap with the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Egypt appreciated the support provided by UN-Women throughout the country's democratization process, promoting women's political participation and economic empowerment, particularly in rural areas.

55. Women had a vital role to play in the advancement of peace and security, development and

human rights. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to three women in light of their non-violent struggle for the right of women to full participation in peacebuilding work was a clear testimony to the international community's recognition of the role of women in those areas.

56. Egypt had put women's rights at the forefront of its national agenda and was examining a new approach using economic empowerment to enhance gender equality and, consequently, to promote political participation. The new Government's road map included harmonizing domestic law with its relevant regional and international obligations in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women; enhancing the National Council for Women to reflect the new political developments and to promote women's political participation; augmenting efforts to eradicate female illiteracy, and encouraging girls to enter the field of science and technology.

57. Egypt hoped that the United Nations system and the international community would provide the strong support required to implement the road map.

58. **Mr. Zhumabayev** (Kazakhstan) said that the United Nations played a critical role in ensuring that women were able to exercise all their rights fully. UN-Women should be actively involved in the forthcoming events held under the auspices of the United Nations to in order to enrich the gender component and outcomes. Also, gender analysis and relevant statistical data should be further developed in the activities of the United Nations system, to support gender-friendly policymaking.

59. Progress towards gender equality was fragile and uneven, and there was a glaring gap between declarations and activities on the ground. Kazakhstan was incorporating international standards into its national legislation and enacting norms to empower and protect women. Recognizing that the key factor for the economic empowerment of women was decent work, an effort had been made to decrease unemployment among women and to close the gap between the wages of women and men, while increasing social welfare measures.

60. The role of women in decision-making in Kazakhstan was steadily increasing and becoming more significant. More than half the civil service positions were now held by women, and women were well represented in the business sphere. In addition, a multipronged gender strategy had been adopted to address gender-related issues and to equip women with comprehensive knowledge about their legal rights. The Government reviewed and resolved complaints by women who had suffered violence or discrimination; while victims of abuse had access to immediate assistance in crisis shelters throughout the country.

61. **Ms. Morgan** (Mexico) said that women continued to suffer the violation of their human rights and freedoms, exclusion from decision-making and lack of opportunities for professional development. Mexico trusted that the establishment of UN-Women would lead to a greater inclusion of the gender perspective in all actions taken under the umbrella of the United Nations, and welcomed the fact that its strategic plan paid special attention to the most vulnerable groups of women.

62. Much remained to be done to ensure the involvement of women in the development of their communities, to educate young women and enable them to participate in decision-making, and to ensure their safety. The issue of violence against women remained a priority for the Mexican Government, which was taking multifaceted measures to combat it.

63. Women were playing an important role in the current political transitions and changes, but their political role should not be limited to the transition stage; they had the right to form part of all decision-making processes in times of conflict and of peace. Truly democratic societies would only be generated by helping women develop their leadership capacities.

64. **Ms. Dunlop** (Brazil) said that reducing inequalities between people, regions and genders lay at the core of the Brazilian Government's policies. Women were the principal victims of poverty, but also the best allies in the strategies designed to overcome it. Thus, women were the main beneficiaries of Brazilian social policies, which had removed many millions from extreme poverty, leading to a social transformation with a huge impact on gender equality and women's empowerment.

65. The Government was now turning its attention to childcare and early childhood education, which would free women to pursue career paths outside the home. Also, in view of the persistence of maternal mortality, improvements were being made to the public health system to guarantee care through pregnancy and the first two years of a child's life. In addition policies had

been implemented to reduce adolescent pregnancies, improve cancer screening and halt the march of HIV/AIDS among women.

66. The election of Brazil's first woman President had been a landmark for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The new President had made it a priority to increase the participation of women at top decision-making levels, because women continued to be underrepresented in all areas of decision-making and their political participation did not reflect the major contribution they made to every aspect of the country's development. Women must be able to fully enjoy their social and economic rights in order to play a role in the destiny of their countries.

67. The Brazilian Government would be hosting the Third National Conference of Policies for Women in December 2011 to evaluate progress and define new priorities; it would represent another step towards the democratic construction of a more egalitarian, inclusive and just society.

68. **Ms. Löw** (Switzerland) said that the advancement of women and the elimination of violence against them would only be achieved by tackling the root causes of inequality: stereotyping and discrimination. Accordingly, Switzerland called on Governments to make the rights guaranteed in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international human rights instruments a priority of their social and economic development efforts.

69. Women should be acknowledged as experts on matters that affected them, which implied granting them the autonomy to effect real change. Switzerland believed that UN-Women would accelerate progress in that area through its expertise and the network it had established with the United Nations and its Member States.

70. Women had an important role to play in the peacebuilding process, as called for by Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security; however, they required access to resources that allowed them to become players in their own right. Global human security implied not only freedom from violence, but also full respect for all human rights and, therefore, the rights of women. Women across the Arab world had openly proclaimed their willingness and ability to play a part in their country's politics, but there was no guarantee that they would be included in that domain when peace returned.

71. Female genital mutilation was symptomatic of inequality and, as a result of migration, developed countries were now faced with the problem. Switzerland had amended its law to define the practice as a crime. However, awareness-raising and prevention were the key elements to end it and that required close collaboration between the States and the relevant government and non-governmental organizations. Multilateral discussions should be held on the role of migrant destination countries so as to identify best practice and formulate norms to abolish the procedure.

72. **Mr. Rakovskiy** (Russian Federation) said that gender equality and the advancement of women were major challenges for the international community, which was united in its efforts to attain those goals. His Government believed that the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women must remain the chief intergovernmental forum for constructive dialogue among States on the issues of gender equality, combating violence against women and gender-based discrimination. Close coordination between the Commission, as the policymaking body, and the Executive Board of the newly created UN-Women, tasked with operational matters, would ensure the success of the structure, which must strictly follow the principle of geographic universality it its activities, including in the establishment of division offices and country-specific programmes. Such programmes should be undertaken only at the request of the concerned Governments, while the establishment of field offices and the appointment of country managers needed to be approved by the local authorities. It was necessary to align the goals of the recently adopted UN-Women strategic plan, 2011-2013 with the desired results and ensure the transparency of the Entity's work and resource accountability mechanism. As a member of the UN-Women Executive Board, his Government sought to engage in a constructive dialogue in the interests of all regional State groups.

73. His Government was committed to achieving gender equality, believing that national development was determined to a large extent by the political, economic and social advancement of women, and based its work on the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women following its consideration of the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports submitted by the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Convention. The most important aspect of gender

equality was economic parity and the ability of women to exercise their right to work. In the Russian Federation, women predominated in education, health and finance sectors and held a large proportion of the management posts in private companies and the majority of the top management posts in small and medium enterprises. His Government supported the position of the International Labour Organization concerning the need for secure conditions to enable women to start their own businesses as one way to achieve full employment and decent work for all. Women were becoming increasingly visible in his Government and headed the ministries responsible for economic development, agriculture, and health and social development. A woman also occupied the third-ranking Government post.

74. In a bid to help women strike the optimal balance between their professional and family lives, there were continuing efforts to strengthen the system of maternity and child protection and increase financial incentives in order to achieve higher fertility rates. His Government commended United Nations efforts to end violence against women and took note of the recommendations of the Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign, with the view that each State must develop its own strategy. The Secretary-General's Network of Men Leaders was another helpful initiative in that regard.

75. **Ms. Abubakar** (Libya) said that strengthening gender equality and empowering women would be central to every institution in the new Libya. Libya's new administration affirmed its commitment to implementing all international agreements and undertakings concerning the human rights of women and combating discrimination. One could only condemn the rape, violence and other violations committed by Al-Qadhafi's battalions against women and girls throughout Libya during the 17 February revolution, not to mention the campaigns of arrest carried out indiscriminately against the youth of both sexes. Women, who represented 50 per cent of Libya's population, must play a leading role in reconstruction, for they were better educated and showed the greatest interest in continuing their studies beyond the secondary level.

76. The National Transitional Council had included the advancement and political and economic empowerment of women among its priorities. The new Administration was also striving to implement and develop further national legislation protecting women's rights guaranteed under the relevant international instruments, including the right to enjoy education and health services, social security, retirement pensions, the right of ownership and the right to pursue economic and other activities.

77. Woman had played an outstanding role in the 17 February revolution, supporting men in universities and all other institutions and creating numerous grass-roots social and humanitarian associations both in and outside Libya, whose aim was to alleviate the mental and physical suffering caused by the war of liberation. They had also provided relief assistance to thousands of displaced persons, both domestically and abroad, especially in Tunisia.

78. Her country welcomed the adoption by the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) of its strategic plan 2011-2013, which would enhance UN-Women's ability to carry out its mission. Indeed, a vast amount of work awaited it and many achievements were expected of it in the areas of education, training, health and increased awareness of women's rights. The need for equitable geographic distribution in respect of grants, jobs, programmes and training must be emphasized. Libya hoped for support from the international community in building the country's new democratic institutions. It also placed great hopes in UN-Women and, as a member of its Executive Board, would not fail to fulfil its obligations towards it once the country became stable and had a democratically elected Government.

79. Her delegation wished to express its apprehension over the aggravation of the humanitarian situation of Palestinian women as a result of the gross violations of their rights on the part of the Israeli occupying powers, who persisted in their racist practices and persecution of the Palestinian people, especially women, ignoring every international instrument on the protection of human rights, as evidenced by their continued blockade of Gaza and settlement-building.

80. **Ms. Heshiki** (Japan) said that, as a member of the Executive Board of UN-Women, Japan planned to make a strong contribution to delivering tangible results.

81. The major earthquake suffered by Japan earlier in the year had enhanced appreciation of the significance of women's participation and the central role played by

women's groups in providing assistance to victims. The Government's reconstruction policy stipulated that women should participate in every aspect of recovery.

82. Furthermore, the goal of Japan's third Basic Plan for Gender Equality was to achieve at least 30 per cent of leadership positions for women, and the Government had renewed its determination to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.

83. The Government had announced new international health and education policies in order to advance efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in particular a maternal and child health-care programme.

84. The participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution needed to be strengthened. Also, women had an important role to play in the political processes during the nation-building phase of countries in political and economic transition, and Japan took that into account when providing Official Development Assistance. For example, its aid to Nepal was aimed at promoting gender equality and social inclusion at the local and the national level.

85. **Ms. Astiasarán Arias** (Cuba) said that developing countries faced huge obstacles to fulfilling the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals, including the current global crises, and the reduction in Official Development Assistance. The eradication of gender inequality entailed eliminating unequal terms of trade, the imbalance in the exploitation of natural resources and in wealth distribution, as well as irrational expenditure on weapons and war. There would be no progress towards full gender equality and the empowerment of women without sustainable development and a just and equitable international order.

86. Eliminating violence against women required the elimination of all unilateral coercive measures. The embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States Government constituted a genocidal act and the main form of violence suffered by Cuban women and girls, as well as a major obstacle to their advancement. The unjust sentences being served by five Cubans in the United States were also the cause of great suffering to their next of kin.

87. Cuba had worked arduously to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment long before the recent international efforts in favour of women. In Cuba, more women than men were university graduates, professionals and judges and over 40 per cent of members of Parliament were women.

88. Cuba supported the work of UN-Women and trusted that it would develop mechanisms to follow up on all the commitments made at the Beijing Conference.

89. The developed countries, which were responsible for the dismal international panorama, should understand that the current crises affected everyone and required urgent collaboration to find collective solutions. More than ever, realization of the right to development was essential for the advancement and empowerment of women in the countries of the South.

90. **Ms. Rosenberg** (Israel) said that Israel had committed to substantially increasing its contribution to UN-Women for the next three years. Gender equality was a fundamental principle that had long guided her Government and was enshrined in the 1948 Declaration of Independence. Women had always enjoyed full rights and equality in Israel and currently represented more than half of all the judiciary, the university students and staff, as well as playing a leading role in politics.

91. Israel was a leader in the struggle for women's equality with multiple programmes to increase awareness and numerous institutional mechanisms to promote equality. Moreover, legislation had been adopted stipulating that all bills submitted to the Knesset must be subject to a gender analysis before being passed.

92. Israel was deeply committed to full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the inclusion of an increased gender perspective in peacekeeping operations and peace processes. However, it was deeply concerned about the issue of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, and especially alarmed by the involvement of United Nations peacekeepers in sexual misconduct in Haiti. It appreciated the Secretary-General's commitment to ensure enforcement of the zero-tolerance policy in that regard.

93. Israel recognized the link between empowering women and advancing global development goals; consequently, gender equality was a priority of its international development cooperation agency. In addition, Israel was committed to sharing its advanced agriculture technology with others.

94. Education remained another key component for empowering women and Israel's cooperation agency offered numerous education programmes for women, while its Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center hosted international workshops and a biennial international conference on development issues for women leaders.

95. **Ms. Van den Hul** (Netherlands) said that women still lived in a man's world, which was unfortunate because there was a direct link between increased female participation and economic growth.

96. The current global situation was challenging, but offered a unique opportunity to look for new solutions in which everyone could participate fully, using their talents to their full potential. Nevertheless, a change in attitudes, policies and actions was required to improve the position of women worldwide. It should start with a shared agenda, endorsed by Government, business, civil society and women's networks, mapping the way towards inclusive cooperation through empowered participation.

97. Governments remained key stakeholders in the advancement of women and should act as catalysts for change by adopting a broad diversity agenda that included policy measures and a legal framework to ensure women had equal opportunities and enjoyed equal rights at all levels. Quota systems had proved successful in achieving equal representation of women in politics as well as in the corporate world. Public-private partnerships were also needed to create sustainable solutions for women in the workplace.

98. Much had been achieved since the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted over 30 years earlier, but there were still too many women who did not have equal access or equal opportunities.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.